



Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-3605

November 16, 2021

The Honorable Steven Lieberman
Undersecretary for Health
U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
810 Vermont Ave, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20520

Dear Undersecretary Lieberman,

Congratulations on your recent appointment as Acting Under Secretary for Health and thank you for your career of service to our nation's veterans. We greatly appreciate the work of the Department of Veterans Affairs to honor our promises to those who have served our country. As members of Congress representing the North Texas region and the second largest VA health care system in the country, we write to request the Veterans Health Administration move forward with a market assessment of the Garland VA Medical Center (VAMC) expeditiously.

As a result of a bipartisan effort and a generous donation from Baylor Scott & White Health, the Garland VAMC opened in Garland, Texas in April 2020, giving new use to the previous facility. Since that time, the facility has served thousands of veterans, with the potential to better serve over 184,000 North Texas veterans and create an estimated 5,000 jobs. At the start of the pandemic, the Garland VAMC quickly mobilized to provide care and treatment to veterans that contracted COVID-19. Over the last year and a half, the facility has expanded outpatient services to include ambulatory care, women's health, clinical pharmacy, nutrition, social work, mental health, dermatology, chiropractic, and radiology services. We are confident that with additional bed capacity and inpatient services, the Garland VAMC will be a leading example for other veteran facilities.

While the Garland VAMC represents an important step to ensure that North Texas veterans can receive care, there is currently no emergency room serving the over 240,000 people that reside in the city of Garland, Texas. Additionally, the VA North Texas Health Care System is currently outsourcing over 200 beds per day and experiencing wait times of up to 40 days for primary care at some facilities. This is a solvable problem and we must take an all-of-government approach to ensure that we are providing the necessary services for the veterans in our community.

The Garland VAMC is currently operating as an outpatient facility but has the capacity to handle up to 180 beds per day if the facility is upgraded to full operational capacity. In the interest of time and the provision of care during the ongoing public health emergency, the full-sized hospital was opened for administrative and COVID-19 care purposes, but all parties were in agreement on the potential the facility holds. It is now time to pursue that potential.

The North Texas region is one of the fastest growing areas in the country, and the sixth fastest VA growth market. We believe that this expansion of Garland VAMC will greatly increase our ability to serve the millions of people who call North Texas home and we must use all resources at our disposal to meet the needs of the growing veteran population in the region, and be good neighbors to our civilian community. The VA North Texas Health Care System will require a market assessment in order to determine the efficacy and feasibility of implementing this expansion, and we await the results of that study with urgency in order to move forward with this much-needed initiative.

We respectfully ask that you move forward with performing and completing a market assessment as soon as possible, and no later than February 1st, 2022, to determine a plan for optimizing the space at the Garland VAMC to meet patient needs for both veterans and our North Texas neighbors. Thank you for your consideration of this request and your ongoing work in supporting our nation's veterans.

Sincerely,



Colin Allred
Member of Congress



Pat Fallon
Member of Congress



Lance Gooden
Member of Congress



Marc Veasey
Member of Congress



Jake Ellzey
Member of Congress



Van Taylor
Member of Congress



Eddie Bernice Johnson
Member of Congress